

Small Group Materials - Genesis 10

Leaders Note: The table of nations in Genesis 10 is a challenging passage. Sandwiched between the nakedness of Noah and the tower of Babel, we find this record of the sons of Noah and their seventy descendants. One reason this passage exists is to show that God kept His promise to Noah (made through the covenant of Genesis 9) in spite of Noah and Ham's faithless actions.

In this lesson we will first explore the faithless actions of Noah and Ham. We then turn to God's blessing, and finally look at how God uses people who have acted out of imperfect faith.

Please feel free to insert any other passages that illustrate God's faithfulness that may have special significance to your group.

Because of the nature of this study and the passage that it addresses, we suggest that you do not read Genesis 10 in its entirety. Text will be included in the study as it becomes applicable.

Pray for your time together in God's Word!

Genesis 10

New International Version 1984

The Table of Nations

10 This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood.

The Japhethites

2 The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras.

3 The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath and Togarmah.

4 The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, the Kittim and the Rodanim 5 (From these the maritime peoples spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language.)

The Hamites

6 The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan.

7 The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabteca.

The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan.

8 Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord." 10 The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar. 11 From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah 12 and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.

13 Mizraim was the father of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, 14 Pathrusites, Casluhites (from whom the Philistines came) and Caphtorites.

15 Canaan was the father of Sidon his firstborn, and of the Hittites, 16 Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, 17 Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, 18 Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites.

Later the Canaanite clans scattered 19 and the borders of Canaan reached from Sidon toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and then toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.

20 These are the sons of Ham by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.

The Semites

21 Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was Japheth; Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber.

22 The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram.

23 The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshech.

24 Arphaxad was the father of Shelah, and Shelah the father of Eber.

25 Two sons were born to Eber: One was named Peleg, because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan.

26 Joktan was the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, 27 Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 28 Obal, Abimael, Sheba, 29 Ophir, Havilah and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan. 30 The region where they lived stretched from Mesha toward Sephar, in the eastern hill country.

31 These are the sons of Shem by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.

32 These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood.

Section 1: Noah's Faithlessness

Ask the Group: What are some things that you have seen or experienced, but still have a hard time believing?

Possible Answers: Something shocking—like a car crash, natural phenomena, some mathematical or scientific theorems, historical events, etc.

Ask the Group: Our previous studies taught us that Noah had seen God's power in a lot of different ways, yet he still struggled in his faith (See Gen. 6-9). How have you seen God's power in your life?

- **Ask the Group:** Do these experiences/examples lead you act out of faith in Him? Why or why not?

Ask the Group: Look back at Genesis 9:20-23. How did the drunkenness and carelessness of Noah and the disrespect that Ham had for his father show a lack of faith in God?

20 Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. 21 When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. 22 Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's

nakedness and told his two brothers outside. 23 But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father's nakedness. (Genesis 9:20-23 NIV 1984)

Possible Answer: Noah showed a lack of faith in God by overindulging in wine and not taking care to be modest. Ham showed a lack of faith in God by showing disrespect for his Father. (The text implies that looking was more than just seeing--it was either looking with sexual intent or mocking.)

- **Ask the Group:** What does lacking faith often look like today?

Possible Answer: People relying on the size of their bank accounts for security, pursuit of job status or some other way of signifying value/worth, etc.

Section 2: God's Blessing

Ask the Group: The blessing of Genesis 9:1 echoes the blessing of Genesis 1:28. How is being fruitful and multiplying a blessing?

Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth." (Genesis 9:1, NIV 1984)

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. (Genesis 1:28, NIV 1984)

Possible Answers: "Multiplying" is typically a sign of good health, children preserve your name, they can care for you when you are old, there is safety in numbers etc.

- **Ask the Group:** What other ways do you see God blessing Noah?

Possible Answers: He provides him with a new home again (the earth is restored) and meets his other basic needs (e.g. food).

Section 3: God's Faithfulness

Ask the Group: Ancient documents (like Genesis) were written and copied by hand. Paper and ink were both rare and expensive. What is the writer of Genesis saying by the amount of attention he is giving to the descendants of Noah in Genesis 10?

Possible Answers: They are important. The list tells us more than just what a list of names would tell us.

Ask the Group: Look at Genesis 10:1 and 32. These 'bookends' to this passage show that God's blessing of Genesis 9:1 and Genesis 10:28 was on Noah and his descendants. What significance does it have to us that God's blessing was not nullified by the faithlessness of Noah and Ham?

1 This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood.

32 These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood. (Genesis 10:1 and 21 NIV 1984)

Possible Answers: It shows that even though Noah and Ham did not act out of faith, God still blessed them.

Section 4: God's use of People who have Acted out of a Lack of Faith

Ask the Group: Throughout Biblical history we see examples of God's people being unfaithful to Him and still being used by Him. Can you think of anyone? How were they unfaithful? How were they used of God?

Possible Answers: Abraham, David, Peter.

- **Ask the Group:** What does this say about God's ability to use flawed people?

Possible Answers: God can and does use people whose faith is not perfect.

Ask the Group: In 2 Timothy 2 Paul writes:

11 Here is a trustworthy saying:
If we died with him,
we will also live with him;
12 if we endure,
we will also reign with him.
If we disown him,
he will also disown us;
13 if we are faithless,
he will remain faithful,
for he cannot disown himself. (2 Tim 2:11-13, NIV 1984)

What comfort can you derive from God being faithful to us even if our faith waivers?

Possible Answers: God cannot go against His own faithfulness; Even when I fail, God will still be faithful.

- **Ask the Group:** How have you experienced this in your life?

Ask the Group: Do you believe that God can't use you for His purposes because of past faithlessness on your part? Take a moment with God to surrender yourself to Him anew and allow Him to remind you that you can be used even if you have been faithless in the past.

Ask the Group: What is our community application of this passage?

Leaders Note: You may choose to create your own application question as a group based on your discussion, or highlight a question from this study.